



EXCEEDING THE EXPECTATION

The VA Network 2 Approach to Exceeding Customer Service • Issue 2, Autumn 1998

Great Expectations Program Presented in Columbia, Mo.

By Leo Hill and Sara Elliott, WNYHS

As you will recall from the previous newsletter, VISN 15 visited for a Customer Service presentation in March. One medical center, Harry S. Truman Medical Center in Columbia, Missouri was so impressed that they asked Mr. Feeley, Director of the VA WNY Healthcare System, if **Great Expectations** (customer service) Trainers could present at their site.

We gladly accepted this assignment (even if it meant a two hour drive from St. Louis to Columbia—this is the Heartland!!).

The initial training was designed to be a “train the trainer” type of program. Well, the program ended up becoming, what Columbia Director Gary Campbell called a *jump start* customer service presentation for about 60 of their Service Chiefs and Managers as well as union partnership representatives.

When we arrived at the medical center, we were initially greeted by an employee who was very helpful and actually escorted us to our destination. At our destination, in the Canteen area we were astounded to see a “Star” bulletin board display of

employees who had performed exceptional customer service! Also posted was a copy of the Ambulatory Care Survey which indicated that they were performing quite well in all areas!! We were stunned—we asked one another—why are we here, they seem to be doing fine?!

When the training was completed, it appeared that we really made a great impression—in fact we like to say “we wowed” them. After the presentation most of the audience had wonderful comments about the presentation, about us as presenters and about how they were all excited to now get their customer service program moving. We felt like we were a success!

The comments made on the program evaluations echoed the verbal comments mentioned above, The Medical Center Director took time out from his busy schedule to send us a very nice thank you letter. All in all, we really feel that we did *jump start* their customer service training program. The Great Expectations Road Show (as we humorously called ourselves) will be glad to go on the road again if the need arises.

The Quickcard is Here!

By Lany Mankowski, WNYHS

On June 24th newly selected *Quickcard* Champions representing the four Care Lines met in Syracuse to plan the implementation of the standardized Network 2 customer service comment card. *Quickcards*, which are color coded to the Care Lines, will make their appearance at all Network 2 Medical Centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics in October, 1998. The

Quickcards are a continuous survey instrument that will help us gauge what is important to our Veterans/Guests so we can better meet their expectations of care and services. *Quickcard* Champions are tasked with compiling, posting and responding to the data from the *Quickcards* for their respective Care Line. Not only will the *Quickcard* data be posted for our Veterans/Guests’ review but will also be submitted for *Pulse Points* publication. The program is designed to give us a *jump start* on improvements that will translate Network 2 into a Site of Excellence for all **Customer Service Standards**.

What to Expect...

✕ Benchmarking

✕ Phantom Shopper Outcomes

✕ Patient Complaint Tracking

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Customer Service Council Visits Network Sites

By Lizabeth Weiss RN, WNYHS

During the week of July 20, 1998, four members of the Customer Service Council visited each of Network 2's sites to conduct a workshop. The purpose of the workshops was to share accomplishments that are making a difference in the experience veterans, family members, employees, vendors and other customers find at these VAs and to facilitate the development of local action plans for Customer Service improvements. Each five-hour workshop provided an interactive educational experience that was tailored to meet the particular needs and interests of each facility. The display board that was featured at the Senior Executive session in Baltimore in December 1997 was on exhibit, as well as video, PowerPoint, interactive presentations, handouts and display boards. At each facility, twenty to thirty-five participants responded to material presented. This encompassed a wide variety of topics including:

- improvements in access to clinics demonstrated by clinic 30 minute appointment wait times
- improvement in ability to obtain a clinic appointment within thirty days of request
- the need to reduce clinic cancellations, the implementation of the Quick card across the Network
- the Phantom Shopper program
- the pilot program that compensates veterans when their interaction does not meet the standard we have set for care
- the uses for the Patient Pager
- the Greeter program; as well as a host of other actions that have been implemented to improve our customer service.

The information was well received, and left the participants highly motivated and enthusiastic as evidenced by action plans developed for each site. The goals have been incorporated in the Customer Service Council portion of the Business Plan for FY99. For each goal, every facility has an identified champion and target date for completion. The workshop provided information related to mandated Network initiatives, communicated methodologies that have proven to be effective in other facilities, awarded participants with five hours of continuing education credit and resulted in a completed action plan for each facility related to Customer Service initiatives. Evaluations from the program across the Network ranked it 4+ (on a scale of 1-5, one being poor and excellent being 5).

Some quotes from evaluations:

"You have revitalized me. I want to be a part of the team..."

"Energizing—I only hope the support is there to make it work."

"Excellent. Better informed participants. Not everyone knew why they were there or what was to be expected of them."

"A great program that needs to be ongoing."

Network 2 Customer Service Council

Albany	Bath	Canandaigua	Syracuse	WNYHS	Network 2
Louise O'Neil	Judy Harris	Pam Chester	Carol Caldwell	William Feeley	Kim Nazi
Adrienne Frank	Jim Jenkins	Linda Krossber	Linda Hobbick	Karen Vastola	Kathleen Hider
Kathy Prividera	Ruth Lyszczy	Tom Wisnieski	Debbie Rioux	Fabiane Erb	
Phyllis Rusnock	Brian Stiller		Lynn Kairewich	Lany Mankowski	
	Esther Covell		Joseph Shanley	Lizabeth Weiss	
	Carl Haneline			Leo Hill	

The Rollup Group

By Fabiane Erb, WNYHS

For over a year now, the Rollup Group of the Network Customer Service Council has been providing our Network with reports on facilities' performance on the timeliness standards, particularly the 30 minute and the 30 day standards. Here's the report for 3rd Quarter, FY98:

Customer Service Timeliness Standards Report

30 Minute Standard

Clinics	Albany			Syracuse			WNYHS			Bath			Canandaigua		
	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98
Primary Care	97%	97%	89%	***	28%	80%	80%	77%	75%	93%	95%	98%	94%	98%	96%
Cardiology	IS	63%	63%	***	77%	79%	64%	71%	77%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dermatology	96%	93%	92%	IS	IS	IS	92%	90%	92%	100%	100%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
ENT	100%	100%	100%	***	35%	69%	76%	79%	74%	100%	100%	IS	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gen. Surgery	68%	63%	77%	***	72%	81%	68%	98%	75%	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	IS	100%
GI	76%	50%	50%	***	45%	45%	94%	90%	93%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
GYN	IS	IS	68%	IS	IS	IS	90%	81%	75%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mental Health	100%	NM	NM	***	84%	26%	99%	98%	99%	100%	73%	76%	Not Done	100%	99%
Neurology	81%	81%	69%	***	47%	79%	69%	81%	70%	100%	96%	100%	83%	IS	100%
Ophthalmology	N/A	N/A	N/A	***	57%	73%	79%	98%	98%	98%	97%	85%	100%	IS	100%
Optometry	N/A	N/A	N/A	IS	59%	27%	90%	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%	78%	IS	N/A
Orthopedics	98%	98%	97%	***	74%	60%	97%	100%	95%	100%	100%	IS	N/A	N/A	N/A
Podiatry	84%	98%	97%	***	93%	82%	91%	87%	73%	100%	88%	IS	97%	IS	98%
Rheumatology	NM	NM	NM	IS	IS	IS	83%	95%	83%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Urology	100%	100%	NM	***	98%	94%	58%	60%	86%	100%	92%	IS	100%	IS	99%

30 Day Standard

Clinics	Albany			Syracuse			WNYHS			Bath			Canandaigua		
	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98	Apr.98	May.98	Jun.98
Primary Care	27	NM	NM	1	2	2	20	30	2	2	2	2	14	26	23
Cardiology	88	82	81	4	4	4	54	75	37	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dermatology	190	187	218	116	116	109	51	51	9	21	8	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
ENT	1	NM	NM	41	39	32	2	16	15	46	41	31	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gen. Surgery	5	NM	NM	34	35	37	3	10	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	26	26
GI	63	64	70	17	17	17	38	89	21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
GYN	4	4	11	1	1	1	7	45	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mental Health	10	NM	NM	1	14	6	7	10	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not Done	10	6
Neurology	1	NM	NM	27	27	20	48	37	32	2	2	3	14	29	25
Ophthalmology	19	46	69	14	56	50	11	23	47	15	25	30	31	Not Done	28
Optometry	63	67	54	45	28	24	31	29	27	8	5	5	19	26	N/A
Orthopedics	36	27	32	35	14	16	2	27	16	4	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Podiatry	10	18	13	137	121	112	32	32	26	36	42	4	11	26	22
Rheumatology	14	14	14	95	95	95	25	25	22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Urology	6	NM	NM	10	43	39	12	26	16	6	2	4	11	29	15

NM = Not Measured due to compliance level (has met std 6 months or more)

N/A = Clinic Type Not Available at Site or data not available due to scanning

IS = Insufficient Sample Size

Not Done = During April 1998, Canandaigua did not measure Mental Health

*** During conversion to new measurement method, Syracuse experienced significant data validity problems, so no data is reported.

FY98

Apr/May/June

Bill Feeley, Chairman, Customer Service Council

We've noted improvements in performance each report. Local Care Line managers are providing action plans to improve the 30 day performance in clinic specialties which have not consistently "met" or exceeded this standard.

Network Customer Service Plan for FY99

By Louise O'Neil, Albany

Network 2 will address customer service improvements with the following action items in the FY99 Tactical Plan:

➤ Continue the **monthly Rollup Reports** for FY99. The 20 minute standard will be used in place of the 30 minute standard, and the 30 day standard will be continued. Areas beyond the FY98 15 clinic specialties will be included in FY99, with the input of the Network Care Line Managers. Quarterly **clinic cancellation reports** will continue, and periodic measurement of **intra-Network consult response time** (30 day standard) will be conducted.

➤ **Internal Shopper/Peer Consultation visits** will occur at each site of Network 2 during FY99, including CBOCs at Binghamton and Rome and the Rochester OPC. Use of a standardized report card will facilitate focus on observations and experiences for continuous improvement strategies.

➤ Continue the **semi-annual Customer Service presentations at each site's Medical/Dental staff meeting** to share survey results, best practices and improvement strategies.

➤ Continue **Bayer training to improve patient-provider interactions**; during FY99, 100% of Network 2 providers will participate in Bayer training.

➤ Maintain **Greeter program** at each site of Network 2. Greeters serve as a daily focus group to discover how our veterans and guests experience our facilities.

➤ Vice President, Customer Service will **share action plans** to improve Customer Service standard performance at **monthly Network 2 Executive Leadership Council** meetings.

➤ Conduct annual **Customer Service "Retreat"** at Canandaigua for FY99 plan and determine top 5 priorities for improvement.

➤ **Benchmarking by visiting two "Best Practice" sites** during FY99. Sites will be private sector and will

include one Children's Hospital. 3-4 Customer Service Council members will participate in the visits and will share "lessons learned" and improvement ideas with Network Customer Service Council for consideration and implementation.

➤ **Partner with Network 2 "Webmaster"** Kim Nazi to share Customer Service information and initiatives on the website, and to develop feedback mechanisms for our customers via that medium.

➤ **Conduct "non-secret shopper" reviews** at Buffalo for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery and at Syracuse for Neurosurgery. These reviews will provide improvement ideas and customer perspective from the "patient" and from staff involved in the process from start to finish. Particular emphasis is given to these two programs since they are referral sites for the Network and feedback to date has indicated opportunities for improvement.

➤ Publish semi-annual **"Exceeding the Expectation" Newsletter** to share information on Network 2 Customer Service initiatives and progress with staff of our Network and others.

➤ **Conduct "Quick Card" surveys** across Network 2 by Care Line. Customer feedback results will be used by Care Line Managers and facility leadership to drive improvement activities.

➤ Benchmark by **sending Network 2 Customer Service team to annual Picker Institute Summer Symposium**, both as presenters and as participants. Network 2 can share with other healthcare organizations what we are doing and learn from others' "best practice" ideas and how to improve our service delivery in healthcare.

➤ **Continue the use of behavioral customer service skills** through the ongoing use of the Kaset "Coaches Toolkit" for "Keeping the Skills Alive". This training is directly applicable to the 30 hours/year standard for FY99, and to

the continued success and improvement of service delivery in Network 2.

The Network 2 Customer Service Council listens to feedback from our customers, and then takes action to improve our service delivery to them. We continue to utilize various "listening posts" and continuous measurement systems, to keep our focus and steadily improve.

Our goal is to be the best. In timeliness for example, why should there be *any* waiting time for a scheduled appointment? As we look back, we see significant progress has been made, but great opportunities lie ahead for further improvements. We strive to keep alive a spirit of creativity and innovation and ask "why not?"

Clip and Save!

For assistance or sharing ideas, contact the following Network 2 Customer Service Council project leaders:

• Newsletter

Lizabeth Weiss, WNY (716) 834-9200 x2193;
Louise O'Neil, Albany (518) 462-3311 x2400

• Rollup/Reports

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• Internal Shopper

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Carl Haneline, Bath (607) 776-2111 x1120

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• Network Provider Update

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